

"Let Your Light Shine": Adult Formation & Education at St. John's

The Rev. Sarah Reynolds, Associate Rector



When I arrived at St. John's just over a year ago, I knew I was joining a special community. I was – and still am – so moved and inspired to be a part of a church so dedicated to making a real difference for good in the world: spreading God's love and letting your light shine in so many places it's needed. St. John's is a community that understands implicitly that being a Christian is not simply a particular affirmation about who God is, but also – and crucially – is about how that affirmation is expressed in our lives. That is, Christianity is not just about belief, but about the action, the way of being in the world, to which our beliefs give rise. And it's been clear to me from the beginning of my time here that St. John's understands this well.

Also clear to me is that in order to maintain this good work in the world that is so desperately needed, we also have to be spiritually healthy and nourished from within. I think of Christian Adult Formation and Education as having 2 vital roles in our lives as Christians: it is both the spiritual food that keeps us nourished, healthy, and full of stamina for our work, and it is the bridge between belief and action – the answer to the “so what?” question.

From weekday Bible Studies to Sunday morning Adult Education Hour; from book discussions, to creed workshops, to special opportunities to dig deep into big theological ideas (like our series on the Cross during Lent or our current Advent focus on the Incarnation); from themed sermon series, to our “Introduction to Mysticism” speaker series, to our new “Conversations at the Crossroads” roundtable discussion offerings, we are building an Adult Formation & Education program to foster our thriving outreach ministries by giving us both theological foundations and spiritual nourishment.

Adult Formation & Education touches all areas of our “Core 4” markers of identity. As the exploration of the “what” and “why” of our beliefs, it forms the theological and spiritual foundation of our **Worship** together. It is the engine – and the fuel for that engine – of our commitment to **Make a Difference** in the world. Through time spent together in discussion, contemplation, and struggling together over scripture, theology, and spiritual questions, it is a crucial way we **Build Community** with one another.

And, of course, it is absolutely indispensable as we seek to **Grow** together as disciples on our journey of faith and life.

The time I've spent this past year learning, exploring, and contemplating questions of our shared faith this past year have been a joy and a privilege for me as you bring your own musings and your full selves into this shared project of growth in our discipleship. I'm looking forward, as I hope you are, to building on these foundations we've laid in the coming year, with more opportunities to go deeper together: from seasonal themes and big theological conversations, to hosting exciting speakers on relevant spiritual topics, to more practical workshops on things such as how to read scripture or unpacking the mystery of the sacraments. My goal and my role are to continue to build a full program of Adult Formation & Education here at St. John's – both for our own spiritual nourishment and as the basis of the nourishment we, in turn, give the world. Your financial pledge helps to support all of this vital work we do together – both within our own parish community and in the world beyond our walls. If you haven't yet made your pledge for 2023, I hope you will do that soon. Think of it as an Advent gift, preparing the way for all that is unfolding for us in the coming year as we grow in our faith and grow closer to one another, to the world around us, and to God.